

# 10 Tips on How to Build the Capacity of Your Staff to Engage ALL Families

**Tip #1** - Show the following video from tolerance.org's web site and ask your staff discuss the following questions.

<http://www.tolerance.org/activity/family-engagement>

What does Foster do that's different from your practice? The same as your practice?

What constraints, as Foster articulates them, do the families of his students have that may inhibit parent/teacher engagement?

**Tip #2** – Teachers can distribute the following Parent Involvement Survey from the Mid Atlantic Equity Center to parents at the beginning of the year to understand their needs and desires for support from the school or classroom.

<http://www.maec.org/tadocs/pinvolve.html>

**Tip #3**– Allocate 5 minutes during staff meetings to discuss parent involvement. Pick a teacher that has a good outreach strategy and invite one parent who has a positive relationship with the teacher. Have both the teacher and parent talk about their perspectives on how they work together and how it has affected the child.

**Tip #4**– Challenge every teacher to build a relationship with at least 3 parents during the month that they don't typically see but want to see. Keep a school list (especially in secondary) so that families are not duplicated. Plan to report back at the next staff meeting on strategies that were successful for building relationships. Tips on how to build a relationship:

- Make a positive phone call and tell the family something good that their child accomplished.
- Listen, listen, listen!
- If a parent shares a personal interest, remember what it was and ask a follow-up question the next time you see them.
- Ask Parents

**Tip #5** – Distribute the following article from tolerance.org to your staff and answer the questions in small groups on the bottom of the article.

<http://www.tolerance.org/print/magazine/number-31-spring-2007/question-class>

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**Tip #6** – Use the following contact form to understand a parent’s preference about how to communicate with them. Don’t simply rely on the student database.

[http://www.tolerance.org/sites/default/files/documents/tt\\_abc\\_parent\\_contact.pdf](http://www.tolerance.org/sites/default/files/documents/tt_abc_parent_contact.pdf)

**Tip #7**– Address language barriers. Show the following video and answer the questions specified on the web site.

<http://www.tolerance.org/activity/overcoming-language-barriers>

**Tip #8**–Discuss diversity. Ask every teacher to pick one activity every month from: *‘Specific Activities for Becoming a Culturally Responsive Teacher’* found on

<http://www.washoe.k12.nv.us/district/departments/diversity/diversity-for-educators>.

Dedicate time during each staff meeting for teachers to share and reflect on their feelings, perceptions and experiences.

**Tip #9**–Brainstorm with your staff, ways to create family-school partnerships. Create an action plan that includes the following elements, from Beyond the Bake Sale, by Karen L. Mapp:

- Building Relationships
- Linking to Learning
- Addressing Differences
- Supporting Advocacy
- Sharing Power

**Tip #10**– Encourage teachers to try a variety of approaches when attempting daily communication with families, such as class meetings, home visits, portfolio exhibitions, interactive newsletters, personal phone calls, e-mail and websites all provided in the families’ home languages. More information on home visits can be found at

<http://www.pthvp.org/video.html>.